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TITLE: HIV Knowledge And Risk In Female STD Clinic Patients: A Three Clinic Comparison

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES: The purpose of this study was to examine the accuracy of HIV/AIDS knowledge and patterns of highrisk behaviors among a geographically and racially diverse sample of women at risk for HIV infection in Southeastern Michigan.

METHOD: The sample consisted of 358 female patients (M age =25.9 +9.1) at three STD clinics who completed the AIDS Knowledge, Feelings, and Behavior Questionnaire (Dancy, 1991). The three clinics were located in geographically diverse areas of Southeastern Michigan (urban, suburban, rural). One-third of the women (33.8%) were Caucasian, 59.5% were African American, 3.5% were Latino and 2.6% were Native American.

RESULTS: Rural women (n = 83) displayed higher knowledge ($p < .01$) scores when compared to suburban (n = 86) and urban (n = 189) women. Despite higher knowledge scores, the rural women displayed higher risk ($p < .05$) scores as well. This pattern of risk was especially evident for the Communication with Partnerscale ($p < .01$) with rural women less likely to ask a potential sexual partner about his participation in highrisk behaviors (e.g., multiple sex partners, IV drug use) than either urban or suburban women. Urban women, however, were less likely to use condoms than women in either of the other two groups ($p < .001$). Similarly, African-American women were less likely to report condom use ($p < .01$) and more likely to talk to a partner about his risky behavior ($p < .01$) than Caucasian women.

CONCLUSIONS: These data demonstrate the importance of considering cultural norms as well as incorporating sexual communication and negotiation skills when designing HIV/AIDS HERR programs for women.

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